

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

A Victorian  
Government  
initiative



# Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development



## Consultation Report

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## Contents

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1. Introduction.....	4
2. Themes emerging from the consultations .....	5
2.1 General Comments .....	6
2.2 Early Childhood - Partnerships with Parents and Communities .....	7
2.3 Early Childhood - System Development and Reform .....	9
2.4 Early Childhood - Workforce Reform .....	10
2.5 School System Development and Reform.....	12
2.6 School Workforce Reform .....	14
2.7 School Parent and Community Partnerships.....	16
2.8 Opportunities for Cross-Sectoral Reform.....	18
Appendix 1 – Consultation process.....	20

# 1. Introduction

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In April 2008 the Victorian Minister for Education and the Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development released Discussion Papers on Early Childhood Development and School Reform.

The discussion papers proposed a five-year reform agenda, founded on a new integrated approach to the health, wellbeing, learning and development of Victorian children and young people, to deliver the best possible outcomes from birth through to adulthood.

On 10 and 11 April 2008 the Ministers hosted a statewide summit to discuss the Government's proposals. The summit brought together almost 300 practitioners, students, academics and policy makers in early childhood and education to discuss and debate the Government's reform proposals.

During April and May an extensive public consultation program encompassed regional forums, workshops, roundtable discussions, a website survey and inviting written submissions.

We actively sought feedback from young people, parents and families, teachers, principals and other school staff, child care workers, maternal and child health nurses, kindergarten teachers, and local community organisations. Many people generously gave their time and ideas to help refine the reform proposals. More detail about the consultations is at Appendix 1.

Broadly, there was strong support for the reform directions, particularly the 0-18 approach and the sense that children and young people must be at the centre of any reform. There was also a clear sense that much good practice exists and can be built on.

Respondents expressed a desire for more details about the proposals and how they might be resourced and implemented. There was also a view that there could be a stronger focus on disadvantage, social inclusion, cultural diversity and rural/ regional concerns.

In the early childhood sector, feedback highlighted the importance of integration and the distinction between this and co-location. Respondents also emphasised the importance of play based learning, workforce issues, the crucial role of local government in providing early childhood services, and the need for State and local planning to align more closely.

In the schools sector, there was strong support for closer partnerships with non-government schools. Feedback also highlighted issues around measuring performance of schools and staff and the form that interventions and support might take. There was very positive feedback on empowering principals to deal with underperforming staff, enhancing the status of the profession and lifting standards of pre service training, and greater recognition of the important roles played by non-teaching staff.

Across both sectors, there was very strong support for a 0-8 learning and development framework and for maximising opportunities for the early childhood and school sectors to learn from one another. There was consistent agreement about the importance of engaging with parents, families and communities, although with some concerns expressed about a potential increase in staff workload. Feedback also strongly supported closer links with communities and providing more and better information to parents.

This report summarises the key themes emerging from the consultations. Together with further research and advice from international experts, the consultation feedback has been invaluable in helping to shape the final Blueprint.

## 2. Themes emerging from the consultations

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This section outlines the overarching directions of the consultation feedback and summarises specific comments about the early childhood and school reform discussion papers across the three key areas of reform:

- Partnerships with parents and communities
- Workforce reform
- System development and reform.

## 2.1 General Comments

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Overall, stakeholders supported the directions in the discussion papers.

Respondents considered that the school discussion paper built on the *Blueprint for Government Schools*, outlining a timely and ambitious future agenda. They also considered that the early childhood discussion paper extended the reform outlined in the *Victoria's Plan to Improve Outcomes in Early Childhood* report, particularly in the context of the new Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) and Commonwealth Government election commitments.

Respondents were generally keen to see more detail about how the reform proposal might be put into effect. There was also particularly strong support for closer links between schools and early childhood services. The creation of DEECD was seen as a major opportunity to create a new, more integrated service system.

As part of this vision of future education and early childhood services, there was a strong desire to focus primarily on the needs of children, young people and their families, rather than on institutional structures. There was also a strong feeling that existing networks and local relationships should be the starting point for further development of relationships and partnerships.

Greater engagement with parents and communities was well supported. Many examples were provided of good and successful practice in this area. A major theme was that many providers excel in this area, and it is encouraging to see recognition of its importance and their success.

The focus on the quality of the workforce was also welcomed. This is acknowledged as the major determinant of quality across all services. However, all the services acknowledge challenges in attracting, retaining and developing the right people, especially in the face of ageing workforces and a strong labour market.

There was a strong sense that Victoria is not starting from scratch. There is a strong base of achievement, many examples of innovative and effective practices across the system, and a growing evidence base on what works.

Although people generally supported the directions in the discussion papers, they agreed that taken together the proposals represent an ambitious agenda; a clear plan with priorities and timelines will be required to make this agenda manageable.

Finally, there was great enthusiasm for the challenge being laid out in the discussion papers. People working in Victoria's education and early childhood development system have a great commitment to and enthusiasm for their work. They support the idea of taking on an ambitious reform agenda, with the aim of making Victoria's system the best in the world.

## 2.2 Early Childhood - Partnerships with Parents and Communities

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Stakeholders in the early childhood sector welcomed the focus on strengthening partnerships with parents and communities. Three key themes emerged from the written submissions and consultations:

- Focus on children's outcomes
- The role of parents and families
- Reform needs to be driven locally.

### 2.2.1 Focus on children's outcomes

Aligning services to the outcomes we want for children was seen as the starting point for reform. In discussing the need to focus on outcomes, early childhood stakeholders were keen to see a holistic view taken rather than a narrower, learning-centred approach. There was recognition that children have different developmental paces and that different cultures have different expectations for children's development.

The Early Years Learning and Development Framework was seen as a positive initiative for children, staff and parents alike. The need for a play-based approach was reinforced. It was also apparent that measuring learning and development should not impact on the value of a child as an individual. Transition plans for children entering primary school were recognised as supporting continued health, learning and development; they were also seen as a way of helping parents understand their child's needs.

The consultations noted that a focus on outcomes requires connections across government departments, and the many services and organisations that contribute to children's development. A continuing focus on antenatal care was seen as important in ensuring that children get a good start.

### 2.2.2 The role of parents and families

A consistent theme in the early childhood consultation feedback was the importance of parent engagement in their child's development and in the services provided.

There was a clear view that parents want information and support to assist them to better understand, contribute to, and enjoy their child's development. It was agreed that parenting advice and information needs to take into account a range of cultural influences on parenting and ensure that it does not impose 'white middle-class ways'. Further, feedback highlighted that information should be free of jargon, be culturally appropriate and accessible in a range of formats. There was a strong sense that more and better information needs to be available for parents with children who have a disability.

In choosing a service for their child, it was noted that parents need quality information that is simple, relevant and timely. It was also agreed that parents should be encouraged to engage with staff rather than be seen as 'recipients of services'. Feedback cited evidence that parent involvement in services improves children's outcomes and the quality of service delivery, due to stronger connections between staff and children, and responsiveness to children's needs and to the culture of the local community.

Feedback suggested that information should be made available that highlights how the efforts of parents and early years staff can complement each other. It was suggested that evidence-based information is required in this area, particularly in relation to support for staff about how best to work with families in order to improve outcomes for children.

### 2.2.3 Reform needs to be driven locally

There was broad recognition that leadership at the local level will be central to the development of a comprehensive and coherent system of early years services.

Early childhood respondents noted that local government was best positioned to lead the necessary coordination and planning. Local government was identified as having a substantial investment in early years services and broader services for families, and the strong planning capacity seen as critical to future reform. There was recognition that in general local government is best placed to understand the needs of communities. It was further noted that reform needs to consider differences across local governments in terms of strategic direction, population, diversity and geographic size.

## 2.3 Early Childhood - System Development and Reform

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Stakeholders supported the focus on developing integrated and high-quality services for families. Two core themes emerged from the written submissions and consultations:

- Integration across early years services
- Improving services for children with different or additional needs.

### 2.3.1 Integration across early childhood education and care

Early childhood respondents indicated strong support for integration across 0-8 years services. This was widely viewed as a multi-faceted goal that will require ongoing effort.

Co-locating services was seen as a fundamental reform in driving integration. While co-locating children's services on or near school sites was seen to be a key direction, there was recognition that this would not be possible in many instances. Thus, co-location of children's services and a focus on improved collaboration were seen to be important policy goals in their own right.

In addition respondents stressed that integration, requiring services and workforces with different cultures and business processes to come together, would require concerted and ongoing effort that co-location alone would not necessarily deliver. Leaders that understand the requirements of integration and are committed to change were seen as paramount. Networks and partnerships that bring together the range of 0-8 government, private and community services were seen as equally critical. It was commonly reported that such partnerships should link to other coordinating groups and that local government is ideally suited to lead them, with Aboriginal organisations best placed in some communities.

Integration was also seen as offering new opportunities for connections between services from birth to adulthood that support children's needs in common areas. For example, the opportunity to connect the Maternal and Child Health Service with school nursing and allied health workforces was seen as an important reform for supporting children's health and well-being.

### 2.3.2 Improving services for children with different or additional needs

Stakeholders emphasised the importance of reforms to support children with different or additional needs and their families. It was reported that the directions proposed in the discussion paper were positive, but need to be further strengthened.

From a social inclusion perspective, feedback suggested a more explicit focus on removing the barriers to children's access and continuing participation in early childhood services. Providing early positive and inclusive experiences, through services such as Supported Playgroups, was suggested as an important starting point. Providing staff with the flexibility to engage 'hard to reach' families was also seen as central. Respondents noted that a key challenge will be delivering the Commonwealth Government's commitment to make available 15 hours of kindergarten to 'hard to reach' groups. There was also recognition that transitions between services are a vulnerable time at which children and families from a range of backgrounds need additional support.

For children with disability or developmental delay, stakeholders welcomed the proposal for more streamlined support from kindergarten to the first year of school. A focus on inclusive mainstream services and improved connections between mainstream and specialist services were also identified as areas for continuing reform.

## 2.4 Early Childhood - Workforce Reform

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Stakeholders recognised the workforce as the main determinant of early years service quality and outcomes for children. There was a great deal of feedback about proposed workforce reforms around four key themes:

- Structural reforms to improve service and workforce quality
- The need for a comprehensive response to early years workforce reform
- Careers in early childhood education and care
- Professional learning and pre-service education.

### 2.4.1 Structural reforms to improve service and workforce quality

There was broad recognition that regulatory proposals for improved staff to child ratios and higher proportions of qualified staff are important to higher quality early childhood education and care services. Both reforms, however, were noted as having a potential financial impact. Respondents indicated that government should support low income families if fees are increased to meet regulatory requirements.

### 2.4.2 The need for a comprehensive response to early years workforce reform

Stakeholders acknowledged the different cultures, practices and industrial conditions across early years workforces. It was broadly accepted that there is a need for significant development across all early years workforces, but respondents also indicated that reform will require long-term planning and considerable investment at all levels. Responses highlighted the importance of a clear medium term vision for early years workforce reform in Victoria and nationally.

It was also noted that significant shortages exist in specific skill areas and in particular geographic locations. As such, immediate workforce initiatives are critical.

### 2.4.3 Careers in early childhood education and care

There was strong feedback that lifting the professional status of careers in early childhood education and care is central to high-quality service provision. Respondents identified low pay as a barrier to attracting and retaining professional staff. Wages, working conditions and the perceived value society places on the profession were commonly identified barriers to attracting and retaining high-quality staff. Much feedback also centred on the need for improved career structures with recommendations including:

- Developing a career structure focussed on early years services
- Promoting pathways to professionalism for existing staff and potential new sector entrants. This includes provision of pathways for multilingual staff, such as kindergarten assistants from newly arrived communities, to gain higher qualifications
- Identifying career progression trigger points that are supported by services
- Ensuring career structures incorporate flexibility, reflecting the needs of a modern workforce. For example, allowing professionals to re-enter the workforce after a period of absence.

#### 2.4.4 Professional learning and pre-service education

Respondents welcomed a move toward degree qualified staff as the basis for quality early childhood services. In progressing this goal, respondents discussed the importance of ongoing professional learning and shaping the content of pre-service education and professional learning.

There was broad recognition of the important role of professional learning for both improving service quality and attracting and retaining staff. It was noted that for many staff there are few professional learning opportunities. Many thought that a culture of professional learning should be a workforce goal, with ongoing professional learning seen as integral to continuous service improvement. It was also felt that professional learning should be aligned with clear career structures and that a formal registration body for early childhood education and care staff might support this focus.

There was also much discussion about areas and content that should be reflected in pre-service education and professional learning. While it was recognised that early years staff will always need to be trained in their specific discipline, there was much discussion about the skills required to support children and their families more holistically. Comments included:

- Cross-disciplinary skills – there was general agreement that a common base curriculum for the range of early childhood careers is required. This could cover skills in areas such as: communicating the importance of early years development, working in teams across disciplines, building and responding to community contexts, and establishing partnerships with community agencies. The New Zealand pre-service education model was seen to be effective. Cluster and network-based professional learning was seen to support this focus
- Leadership skills – respondents indicated a growing need for education and training that supports managers to lead in the context of changing early years services, particularly in the growing focus on children's broader outcomes and the associated cross-disciplinary work. It was noted that the United Kingdom had developed an early years leadership course
- Supporting children with additional needs – it was suggested that the current Bachelor of Education or Early Childhood Education provides insufficient training for general teachers to recognise and manage children with additional needs. Secondly, it was viewed as difficult to attract and retain professionals with a Bachelor of Special Education in addition to a Bachelor of Education or Bachelor of Early Childhood Education.

It was recognised that reforming the levels of professionalism in early years workforces will be a long-term process, and action will need to occur across Commonwealth, State and local levels.

## 2.5 School System Development and Reform

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Stakeholders supported the aim of “striving for a system of excellence, rather than one with some excellent schools”. Feedback from stakeholders centred on the following key themes:

- School improvement and accountability
- Curriculum provision
- Equity and addressing disadvantage.

### 2.5.1 School Improvement and Accountability

Stakeholders recognised the need for targeted support and, where necessary, interventions to lift outcomes in underperforming schools. They queried, however, how school performance would be defined, assessed and supported and what interventions would look like. There was a general lack of support for ‘league tables’. A range of stakeholders expressed the view that student achievement results alone are not reliable indicators of the effectiveness of schools, and that assessment of school performance must take into account the fact that all schools start from a different base as well as value added measures.

It was commonly suggested that the focus should be on improving how data is analysed at the school level rather than on collecting more data. The notion of a 0-8 framework allowing Prep teachers to assess student progress against baseline data was received positively. Stakeholders expressed some reservations about the proposal to track young people up to Year 12 or equivalent or 19 years of age.

There was support for the idea of high-performing schools supporting improvement in the system. One way to achieve this would be for principals to be able to work across networks to mentor and coach other principals. There was also support for a strengthened network model to drive school improvement.

Proposals to develop consistent expectations and encourage collaboration between government and non-government schools were supported by stakeholders, with some concerns expressed about potential implications for resourcing.

### 2.5.2 Curriculum Provision

Feedback emphasised the need to continue embedding the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) in schools. There was some concern about the parallel development of VELS and a national curriculum, and agreement that State and national curriculum reform must be aligned.

Schools acknowledged the challenge of providing sufficient resources for Maths, Science and Languages Other Than English (LOTE). It was suggested that the focus should be on the top 10 LOTEs rather than spreading resources, such as teacher skills, across 43 languages.

While some stakeholders agreed the focus should be on literacy and numeracy, others considered that information and communication technology (ICT) and environmental science should be priority areas for 21<sup>st</sup> century learning.

Recruiting and retaining teachers for specialist curriculum areas was acknowledged as a significant challenge, particularly for small schools and schools in regional and rural areas.

Stakeholders agreed about the need to be able to provide differentiated responses to meet students’ individual needs, for example via the expansion of a network of select-entry schools. There was discussion of the potential negative impact of specialisation on neighbouring schools and on increasing tension between rural and metropolitan schools.

### 2.5.3 Equity and Addressing Disadvantage

Stakeholders supported strengthening the focus on equity and disadvantage in the Blueprint, and on 'closing the gap'. There was concern the discussion paper had no reference to English as a second language (ESL) students and students from diverse cultural backgrounds. It was felt that the final document should emphasise early intervention for students from a non-English speaking background.

Submissions highlighted the particular challenges faced by children with a disability or developmental delay and their families as they move through the school system. There was support for a more integrated approach to services and strengthening transitions. There were concerns about how the progress of students with disabilities, particularly intellectual disabilities, would be assessed, and suggestions about building in incentives to reward schools demonstrating good practice in provision for students with disabilities.

Respondents similarly supported the focus on reducing disparity in outcomes for Koorie children and young people, although a range of stakeholders called for more ambitious targets and more explicit links to *Wannik*, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's education strategy for Koorie students in Victoria.

## 2.6 School Workforce Reform

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There was agreement from stakeholders about the importance of workforce reform in improving the quality of school education in Victoria. Specifically, three key themes emerged:

- Attracting quality teachers into the profession
- Developing and retaining quality staff
- Developing strong school leadership.

### 2.6.1 Attracting quality teachers into the profession

Stakeholders in both the early childhood workforce and schools workforce identified graduate quality as an issue and proposed a range of ideas for improving graduate teaching courses.

The status of the teaching profession was seen as one reason why teaching does not attract our best and brightest. Participants suggested a range of marketing, publicity and public promotional campaigns could change this perception.

There was debate about minimum entry levels for teaching degrees, with agreement that a balance is needed between high-level qualifications (particularly in subjects such as chemistry and physics), and the desire to teach and ability to engage with children and young people.

There was consistent feedback about the particular challenges faced by schools in regional and rural areas in attracting teachers, especially in high demand subject areas like maths and science. There was also concern about the ability of these schools to attract appropriately qualified LOTE teachers. Stakeholders provided a range of ideas about how to address such shortages, including through incentive schemes.

Developing partnerships between universities, schools and DEECD on recruitment and development initiatives was seen as one way to attract the right people profession and to produce quality graduates. Feedback consistently referred to the need for pre-service teacher education to prepare graduates adequately for the classroom, including through more hands-on experience and better integration of theory, policy and practice. Another suggestion was to expand internship and mentoring programs for graduates.

### 2.6.2 Developing and retaining quality teachers

Once quality teachers enter the classroom, the next challenge is to keep them there. Stakeholders expressed the view that the system should recognise that graduates today have different expectations and respond to different incentives, such as more flexibility to move in and out of the profession and having access to a range of opportunities. School and early childhood stakeholders agreed that the creation of DEECD provides good opportunities for joint professional learning across school and early childhood sectors.

Although stakeholders agreed that teachers' achievements should be respected and rewarded (rather than years of service alone), there was no consensus about how this could be effectively achieved. There were concerns that an incentive or rewards based system may lead to a culture of competition rather than collaboration. Pay increases were not seen as the only incentive that should be considered – other incentives such as increasing professional development opportunities and recognition for specialised skills were suggested.

There was support for the idea of providing incentives for high performing staff to work in underperforming or regional schools, although some schools were concerned that this would mean that they would lose their best staff to other schools. Many stakeholders expressed reservations about the concept of performance pay.

Stakeholders recognised the critical importance of the work of Student Services Officers (SSOs) and Student Support Services Officers (SSSOs) in supporting teachers and principals to focus on teaching and learning. There was support for making this recognition more explicit in the final Blueprint.

### 2.6.3 Developing school leadership

There was widespread agreement that high quality leadership is critical to school effectiveness.

Support structures are needed to develop teaching staff into effective school leaders. Similarly, for principal class officers, peer development and support are seen as essential. However, there were concerns that there are not enough mentors and coaches able to provide this support. Stakeholders suggested building on existing leadership development initiatives with ideas like:

- Educational leadership that is considered throughout the whole school, not just the principal class
- Leadership mentoring and coaching through a formal school leadership mentoring network that is accessible to rural leaders/potential leaders
- School-to-school interaction through formal networks.
- A more structured career path, including a structured leadership program for teachers wishing to become principals
- The creation of a 'pool' of teaching consultants: experienced and effective teachers/coaches to provide and facilitate in-classroom coaching and support.

## 2.7 School Parent and Community Partnerships

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Reform proposals in this area were strongly endorsed, but stakeholders noted that number of enablers would be necessary to build effective partnerships. Discussion centred around three key themes:

- Achieving effective school-parent partnerships
- Achieving effective school-community partnerships
- Co-location and schools as hubs.

### 2.7.1 Achieving effective school-community partnerships

The meaning of 'community' was debated - from communities as neighbourhoods to communities as networks of 'authentic relationships' that can also encompass virtual communities. It was noted that schools need to be aware there are many 'communities' within a school, and many parents and students themselves belong to several different communities.

Community service organisations representatives reported their perceptions that schools can sometimes be difficult to engage with, while school staff reported that community services often seem to lack cohesiveness and accessibility.

Both groups agreed the system could be strengthened by better coordination. It was acknowledged that building and maintaining effective partnerships is very time and labour intensive, and will only work if community partners and schools both make concerted efforts. It was agreed that the system should not duplicate services, but enable schools and services to connect more effectively.

Stakeholders considered that school-community partnerships may be easier to maintain in smaller, rural areas than larger, metropolitan areas.

Stakeholders identified a number of strategies for effective school-community partnerships. There was a strong desire for a set of guiding principles or a partnerships framework expressing unified goals and objectives across schools, businesses and community agencies.

There was concern that the reform proposals may place additional expectations on school staff and dilute the focus on teaching and learning. This could be mitigated by providing professional development opportunities for school staff in building partnership skills.

There was discussion around the need for cultural change to break down competition between schools and encourage resource sharing, including between government and non-government schools and between schools and children's services.

### 2.7.2 Achieving effective school-parent partnerships

Stakeholders raised a number of barriers to effective school-parent partnerships. One theme that emerged was a perception that schools and parents often only have opportunities to interact when there is a problem. It was felt that engaging parents at the secondary level can be more challenging than in primary schools. Schools noted additional challenges engaging with parents from disadvantaged backgrounds or with parents who are disengaged from their child's education.

A range of strategies was suggested to overcome these barriers, such as:

- The development of specific guidelines for parents on how to be involved in a child's education
- Organising events like parent trivia nights where parents and schools can have positive interactions
- Opening schools to provide educational services to parents, and

- Improving parent/teacher interviews.

It was also noted that different strategies can be used to engage parents from different cultures, and that there is a need for schools to recognise that complex family arrangements may require differentiated approaches.

The use of technology, such as mobile phones and the internet, was cited as a way to engage parents, but concerns were raised that this may also increase teacher workload. Participants believed the Ultranet would be a useful tool, but accessibility for lower income families will be an issue.

It was noted that parents need to be adequately informed and resourced to be active in their child's learning. There was also support for encouraging the use of student support groups to involve parents and raise general awareness of the importance of education.

Professional development for school staff is needed to support the reform directions. This can include specific training for teachers on how to communicate better with parents or ongoing involvement of regional offices in supporting schools and parents in dispute resolution and negotiation. The idea of family support officers based in schools was proposed.

### 2.7.3 Co-location and schools as hubs

There was consistently positive feedback about the creation of schools as community hubs through, for example, co-location of services, extended school hours, and sharing of facilities.

Co-location of children's services and schools can deliver positive experiences at the transition a children's service into school. Participants noted, however, that co-location may not always be appropriate or effective without true collaboration between services, and communities and local communities should be able to have input into their hub's configuration.

The idea of 'one stop shops' was strongly supported, particularly for areas without good public transport. Concerns were raised, however, about the barriers to joint use agreements associated with different regulations at various levels of government. Ideas connected with extended school hours were also supported.

## 2.8 Opportunities for Cross-Sectoral Reform

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There was consistently positive feedback from stakeholders about the integration of early childhood services and school education to support a child's health, learning and development from 0 to 18.

Four themes in particular emerged from the feedback about cross-sectoral integration:

- Opportunity to integrate services
- Strengthened transitions
- Providing choice of service
- Workforce reform.

### 2.8.1 Opportunities to integrate services

Stakeholders stressed the difference between co-location and integration of services and many suggested that co-location does not always lead to better collaboration between sectors.

A common suggestion was the need for greater support to integrate early childhood services, health services and schools. Many stakeholders believed that integration requires sectors to develop a shared vision, resources and language, as well as agreed governance arrangements. Suggestions included:

- Using existing networks, such as Best Start, to drive integration at the local level
- Breaking down barriers between organisations that provide services (such as state and local governments)
- Developing strategic local plans from which state and local government can make decisions to locate services to complement each other
- Encouraging cross-sectoral collaboration between schools' and early years' workforces.

### 2.8.2 Strengthened transitions

Stakeholders supported strengthening key transition points between stages of development and learning including from pre-school to school, between stages of schooling and from school to employment or further education.

Feedback indicated that high quality communication is critical and transitions need to be managed collaboratively by all services. In particular:

- A common language across the early years and school sectors is vital, as is a commonly articulated view of a child's progress across the two sectors
- Services and schools need to share information to provide more efficient services and to avoid parents having to "tell their story" multiple times.

### 2.8.3 Providing choice of service

Stakeholders broadly supported the notion of parental choice. Many stakeholders supported making a variety of data available to parents to aid them in choosing children's service providers. Others suggested that data can cause stress within schools, can be misleading and does little to assist parents and students or to lift a school's performance. Stakeholders also acknowledged the issue that some parents are in a better position than others to exercise their choice.

### 2.8.4 Workforce reform

Reforming the workforce of each sector was identified as essential to improved cross-sectoral links. Parity of pay, qualifications, status and conditions between school and early childhood workforces were identified as key areas of difference that will need significant reform.

Stakeholders acknowledged current relationships between early years and schools workforces, but there was little acknowledgement of links between the health and education workforces.

Stakeholders noted the importance of attracting and retaining a quality workforce.

## Appendix 1 – Consultation process

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Feedback was provided on the Discussion Papers in a number of ways as outlined below.

Where workshops and roundtables were conducted, scribes were present to record discussions. Raw data from these discussions and written submissions were analysed according to a common template and provided to the project team.

### Statewide Summit

The Summit held on 10-11 April 2008 brought together almost 300 practitioners, advisory groups, students, academics and policy makers to discuss and debate the reform proposals.

### Regional Consultation Forums

Almost 700 people attended regional forums:

- Traralgon 2 May
- Geelong 3 May
- Dingley 13 May
- Moonee Valley 15 May

### Ministerial Roundtables

More than 100 people – representing stakeholders, experts, business and unions - attended Ministerial roundtables on:

- 28 April
- 8 May
- 14 May
- 21 May

### Office for Children Workshops

- Municipal Association of Victoria (8 May)
- OCECD Advisory Group (9 May)
- Victorian Children's Council (late May)

### Website

- More than 40,000 page hits
- Almost 4,000 downloads of the Discussion Papers overview
- More than 3,000 downloads of the School Reform Discussion Paper
- Almost 3,000 downloads of the Early Childhood Development Discussion Paper
- Over 170 website survey responses

### Written submissions

- 160 substantive submissions
- A range of other written correspondence
- Informal regional activities resulting in submissions